



RECEIVED TOWN CLERK
GRAFTON, MA
JUL 13 2016

Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
30 Providence Road
Grafton, MA 01519

Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2016

A meeting of the Grafton Affordable Housing Trust was held on July 13, 2016 in Conference Room A of the Grafton Memorial Municipal Center.

Present: Vice Chairwoman Mary Campbell, Treasurer Bruce Spinney, Clerk Charles Pratt, Members Ruth Anderson and Kris Koliss. Also present was Ann Morgan, Assistant Town Planner.

Vice Chairwoman Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Action Items

- a. **Outstanding Meeting Minutes** – This item was tabled.

2. New Business – Elmrock Estates – (previously known as Fieldstone Farms) – Wheeler Road – Potential 40B Project

Ms. Campbell recused herself citing potential conflict of interest. She assigned Mr. Pratt the responsibility for running the meeting and removed herself to the audience.

Mr. Peter Adams introduced himself noting that he has served the Town as a member of a number of elected and appointed committees. He noted that he had served on the Affordable Housing Trust for many years including the year the Trust was established and the original plan adopted. He currently serves on the Zoning Board of Appeals for which he will have to recuse himself as his project proceeds through the 40B Comprehensive Permit process. Ms. Morgan noted that one of the reasons the project was before the Trust that night was that the Board of Selectmen are soliciting comments from the public for submission to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership. These comments are part of MHP's process when considering site eligibility for project financing. Comments are due to MHP by Friday, July 15, 2016 and will be submitted via the Board of Selectmen.

He presented the project to the Trust. He noted that he is the property owner and that his family has owned and managed the back field for 60 years. He has tried to sell the property over the years with no luck. The current project includes 36 single family houses of which 9 would be deeded as affordable. Most of the lots have 100 feet of frontage and some lots will be served by common driveways. There will be streetlights and sidewalks. The lots vary in size but are not atypical of other neighborhoods in Town such as the Airport Road, Fairlawn Street, Meadow Lane and the Jay Street neighborhoods. He stated that he was committed to building affordable housing and that this project would provide more eligible units for the Subsidized Housing Inventory. The site would be served by Town sewer, water and gas which are already installed in Wheeler Road.

The Trust and Mr. Adams reviewed a number of elements of the plan as well as comments submitted by the public via the Town's website. Topics discussed included:

- The length of the proposed roadway – approximately 1,500 – which is a significant deviation from the Town limit of 500 feet and would require a waiver. Mr. Pratt expressed concern about

the ability of emergency services to access the homes in the event that the single point of entrance /egress is blocked. Mr. Adams noted that he wasn't concerned as there were a number of dead end streets in Town and that it shouldn't be a problem.

- The proposed width of the road – 24 feet. Mr. Spinney noted that narrow roads can be difficult to navigate and if people are parked on the road especially emergency services. Mr. Adams noted that Meadow Lane is 22 feet wide and that he was unaware that there were any problems as a result.
- Number of waivers – Ms. Koliss asked how many waivers were required and what is the impact to the potential viability of the project getting approval. Mr. Adams stated that he couldn't remember the number of waivers required but that the information was available in the application packet.
- Average market rate price of the house – Mr. Spinney asked what range of pricing was expected for the market rate homes. Mr. Adams noted that he plans to build homes that would be marketed at pricing around \$450,000 and that the affordable units would be priced at the 80% AMI required by the State. His goal is to build houses that will draw hard working couples just starting out. Ms. Koliss asked if he had considered developing an over 55 project. He stated that he had no interest in that option.
- Impacts of the development on the surrounding uses – Mr. Pratt noted that the proposed development was surrounding by a number of open space and recreation uses on properties owned by the Town and the non-profit Grafton Land Trust. A number of comments had been submitted expressing concern about the environmental, conservation and recreational impacts of this project which cuts into the middle of the areas of concern. Mr. Adams reviewed the history of the parcel and the surrounding area which at one point was primarily farmland which was established long before the conservation and recreation uses were established. His property has been an active hay field for many years and never part of the open space & recreation uses noted by commenters.
- Environmental Impacts – Ms. Anderson asked if there as any information available regrading watershed impacts. Mr. Adams noted that the wetlands had been delineated. The plan shows the retention basins required but that he did not have any drainage calculations at this point. Ms. Morgan noted that there were a number of environmental requirements that couldn't be waived as part of the 40B process.
- Consideration of other types of housing – Several members of the Trust asked if other types of housing and other site plan options which could preserve the rear field. Mr. Spinney asked if he had considered rental apartment units which would allow for a denser development plan on one portion of the site while preserving open space. Mr. Spinney noted that large, single family home developments create a number of fiscal and infrastructure impacts on the Town which must be taken into consideration when planning for the future. The sustainability of growth is a concern. Ms. Koliss noted that there is a shortage of rental units not only in Town but regionally and nationally as well. Ms. Anderson asked if he had considered duplex homes which could achieve the same number of units while preserving open space. Mr. Adams stated that he wasn't interested in building anything other than single family homes and that there are a number of apartment and condo complexes already in Town.

Mr. Pratt solicited comments from the audience. Mrs. Marcia Platt of 122 Brigham Hill Road spoke to a number of issues. She noted that there was a lot of good information about the project on the Town's website. She expressed concerns about traffic, environmental, open space & recreation impacts. She

asked that the Trust assess the current proposal based on the goals and objectives of the Housing Production Plan and the Affordable Housing Plan. She noted that she recognizes that this is private property and that Mr. Adams has the right to do as he sees fit. However, she would like to see all parties work together to achieve consensus while balancing his rights and concerns of others.

Mr. Al Sanborn of 38 Cherry Lane presented a list of concerns based on his experience of living in a 40B development in South Grafton. He noted that poor construction of the units have led to a number of repairs and safety issues that have been costly to the homeowners who inherited the problems. Problems with decks, deck stairs, water pressure control devices, roof membranes, insurance premiums, roof re-shingling, and irrigation systems have plagued many of the unit owners, some of them in affordable units. He stated that the financial burden greatly impacts the “affordability” of these units. He noted that none of the money received from the Pulte settlement was reinvested in the development to solve the problems which are ongoing. Mr. Adams stated that he builds a good house and that folks could check with the Building Department if they had any questions about the quality of his work.

Mr. Adams noted that this project is in the very early stages of planning. This is the first step in the site eligibility process he has to go through with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to be considered for financing. No local permits have been filed. Mr. Pratt asked if he would be interested in a mixed housing type site plan. Mr. Adams stated that he’s open to discussion.

Mr. Pratt noted that there was a lot of information to take in and that he didn’t want to make a recommendation one way or the other. Ms. Morgan noted that the project was presented to the Planning Board on 7/11 and Board of Selectmen on 7/12. Public comment has been received in written and verbal format. The Selectmen will issue a letter taking all comment into consideration and will forward all comments along with their letter. The Trust is being asked to submit comments at this time on what was presented – not a recommendation in any fashion. Members of the Trust offered the following comments to be submitted to the Board of Selectmen:

- The Trust supports the production of affordable housing in Town.
- It reviewed the project in relationship to the surrounding land uses noting the unique configuration of open space and recreation network of the abutting land.
- The Trust encouraged the property owner to seek a to balance the production of housing with the surrounding uses and in particular the open space and recreation network.
- Concern was raised that single family housing continues to put a strain on municipal resources and infrastructure. The Town needs to plan ahead for long range sustainability.
- The property owner was asked if the other housing types would be considered such as townhouses or rental units. He stated no – that single family homes were his preference.
- Site development – the property owner was asked if the rear field / lot could be preserved as open space while building out the front lot along Wheeler Road. He noted that this project was in the early stages of design but made no commitment to reconsider the site development plan.
- The Trust noted that the property owner has the right to develop the land and would like to see the Town work with him on a solution that addresses the need for balanced growth, production of affordable housing and a site plan that is more responsive to the open space issues raised by many residents.
- The Trust would like to see the development of unit types which are responsive to the increasing aging population. This issue has been identified in the Draft Action Plan.

- Mr. Adams is encouraged to work with the Town to address issues raised throughout the public comment period.

Ms. Campbell rejoined the Trust and resumed her duties as Vice Chair in running the meeting at 8:00 p.m. She thanked everyone who took time to come to the meeting to participate in the discussion. She further noted the more people understand affordable housing the better for all.

3. Treasurer's Report – Mr. Spinney noted there was no Treasurer's report.

4. Old Business - Housing Action Plan – 2nd Draft

Ms. Morgan noted that she had spoken with Chairman Crossin who had asked that the Trust discuss the next steps for the Draft Action Plan. She stated that the first step was to present the draft plan to the Board of Selectmen, adopt a final version and then proceed to present it to other key Boards and Committees such as Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Community Preservation Committee, the Council on Aging and the Grafton Housing Authority Board. As noted at an earlier meeting, the Trust decided to establish two working subcommittees – Land Acquisition and Public Outreach / Education. Members opted to serve as follows:

Land Acquisition

Charles Pratt
Bruce Spinney
Mary Campbell

Public Outreach / Education

Kris Koliss
Dan Crossin
Ruth Anderson

5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Spinney, seconded by Ms. Anderson. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles Pratt, Clerk

EXHIBITS - None